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Each State organization should be encouraged to give one or two public performances during the year, which would serve the triple purpose of raising a fund to pay the expenses of any good singers who might not be able otherwise to participate; of showing their advancement in singing; and of awakening an interest in the great world's festival of song.

All these State organizations should be subject to certain rules and obligations, and a national director and organizer should rehearse every organization twice or three times in all the music, so as to preserve a unity in style, phrasing, etc.

Without further details, the great importance of securing State-legislative recognition of music (which, it is safe to say, with the coöperation of the national commissioners, probably not a single State would refuse) will at once be apparent. This interest, once secured, could easily be perpetuated, to the permanent advantage of the art.

The national chorus once formed, great festivals of the same character could be arranged for triennially or decennially; and thus incalculable good may be secured through the present opportunity with comparatively little trouble—almost “without money and without price.”

To every earnest musician and music-lover the plan pleads its own cause. It remains to be seen if, with the assistance of the World's Fair commissioners and directory, we shall have the opportunity to create an epoch in music that will shed the lustre of its glory throughout succeeding generations.

S. G. PRATT.

S. G. PRATT, *Esq.*

DEAR SIR: I fully indorse the above plan, and think it might be productive of great good to the cause of music in our country.

That a large proportion of the scheme is practical I feel certain; and that excellent results and impressive performances could be obtained with such a mass-chorus properly drilled I am convinced, *provided suitable music is selected.*

The appropriateness of inaugurating this work for the Columbian celebration is undoubtedly, if for no other reason than the general interest which it would awaken in polyphonic music over the whole country; and I hope that the endeavor will be made.

Yours truly,

THEODORE THOMAS.

A CATHOLIC ON THE SCHOOL QUESTION.

THE ordinary non-Catholic, when he considers the relation of the Catholic Church to the problem of general education, finds himself face to face with an imaginary solid phalanx marching forward to sweep the American public-school system off the face of the land. As he has been taught that the American school system—by which he means, of course, the system of common education in vogue in parts of the United States—is a glorious thing, and in some way responsible for the prosperity of this country, he resents this imaginary attempt to reduce the people to that condition of barbarism which existed before children were fed in equal doses from the big public-school spoon. In searching literature for an illustration of this process of education, one finds it in dear Mrs. Squeers's impartial distribution of sulphur and molasses to her husband's pupils at Dotheboys' Hall.

Even the extraordinary non-Catholic, while having doubts about the splendor of our school system, has greater doubts about the intentions of the church. He has a vague belief that Catholics, who may be individually very reasonable and almost indistinguishable from other Americans, will at a moment's notice form into close ranks behind mitres and crosiers, and capture the public schools or destroy them for the greater political glory of the church.

Usually it does not enter our friend's mind to imagine that the American citizen preferring the Catholic faith has any vital, personal, human interest in the educational question. If the public schools are good enough for the Methodist, the Congregationalist, the Agnostic, why does the Catholic object to them otherwise than because Rome, for purposes of political aggrandizement, insists that he shall keep his children out of them, if possible? This is his question.

It must be confessed that lay members of the church take little trouble to answer it. They have got into the habit of forcing the burden of representing them on the shoulders of their bishops and priests. It is a very bad habit, and one that has created dry-rot in the social life of older countries. It leads to a condition of indolent cynicism which destroys alike true religion and true patriotism. There are times when laymen must speak for themselves out of the fulness of faithful and pure hearts. They are the fathers of children; on them rests the responsibility of making the family a firmer factor for the good of the race. The bishops and priests teach and direct and at times lead; they are the spiritual fathers of the people; but the heaviest responsibility is on the natural fathers who cannot shift it from themselves. The Catholic religion recognizes this so deeply that her priests will not administer the regenerating sacrament of baptism to a child without parental consent; thus the parent is admitted to have greater power over his child than that of life and death. Parental rights are paramount.

Another reason why we Catholic laymen seem to have so little to say on subjects of a religious complexion is that our creed fits us so closely that it is part of ourselves. It is not a hair shirt, but a very easy vestment. Nothing is gained, except discomfort, by trying to force it on others whom it might not fit and who might get tired of it. And, believing as we do that religion is, first of all, a matter of correspondence between God's grace and man's will, we have perhaps a well-founded distrust of our efforts towards the conversion of people whose invincible ignorance in matters spiritual may be a stronger plea for them at the throne of mercy than that enlightenment by which many of us profit so little. Speaking for myself, I know non-Catholics whom I never meet without intense admiration for their elevation of thought and action, or without intense self-abasement and regret that I, walking in all the splendor of the spouse of Jesus Christ, am so much less worthy of the gift of faith. I wish earnestly that to the lustre of their virtues were added the consolations and safeguards which the church gives to her children. I hope that they are Catholics of the invisible church and one with the visible church in the communion of saints.

Knowing, as most Catholics do, many Protestants of the highest character, the Catholic is neither aggressive nor apologetic. He is easy and comfortable in his relations with men who respect his belief; he leaves the expression of religious truth to his spiritual instructors; he believes in the omnipotent power of prayer, although his fear of seeming to imitate the prevalent religious cant may induce him to say nothing about it. But,

nevertheless, he holds that the most precious possession his children can have is that of faith in Christianity; and Christianity in all its fulness, in all the perfection of its divine evolution through the centuries since the coming of our Lord, is held and taught only by the church.

Now, much as he may admire his Protestant friends, of naturally good dispositions, environed by circumstances which strengthen their natural goodness, he asks: How can their children, surrounded by the atmosphere of a time and a language permeated with the influence of neo-paganism, retain Christian morality without deep faith in Christian dogmas as safeguards for the practice of that morality? Public-school education does not supply these; the Sunday-schools are in the long run useless, and the old-fashioned orthodox Protestant family training has irretrievably gone out of fashion. It was a good thing while it lasted; but it had no qualities of permanency. It admitted the right of private judgment in religion,—of private interpretation of the Scriptures,—and "all went loose," as the Germans say. Besides, its Calvinism brought about reaction.

Rationalism in Germany and agnosticism in England are logical conclusions from the free thought in matters of religion enjoined by Protestantism; infidelity in France and Italy is a revolt against the church which commands "Credo" to be the final answer to all doubts concerning the divine origin of Christianity or the divine inspiration of the Scriptures. The irresistible tendency of Protestantism is to revert to its original element; to the element of human protest against dogmatic restrictions and supernatural claims. The tendency of the time is to explain the supernatural by the preternatural. It is easy to believe that science can work a miracle, but very hard to believe that God can work it directly, unaided by science.

In view of this tendency, which permeates literature, which pushes itself forward in the lecture-hall, and even into the pulpit, which colors the matter and manner of the newspaper writer and reporter, which is the energy of the time and the breath of its nostrils, where can a father turn if he believes that the infallible Christian faith taught by the infallible church is the only salvation and safeguard for his children? Where is he to turn for that strengthening of character, spiritual and moral, which he feels his children must have in order to save themselves and to be conservative Christian forces in society? He cannot depend on family teaching only, for fathers are busy and mothers careworn. Such teaching, at best, would be intermittent. He knows that an hour a week in the Sunday-school devoted to the preservation of the religion which Christ died to promulgate, which is the only refuge from anarchy and despair and destruction, is like a mere scratch on the surface of that *tabula rasa*, the child's heart. He knows that a school, public or private, in which the only acknowledgement of the great force that raised earth to heaven and brought heaven to earth is the recitation of the Lord's prayer and the perfunctory reading of a translation of a book that, humanly speaking, is contradictory and incomprehensible, cannot fill his child with a sense of the preciousness of Christianity, of admiration for its awful mysteries, of reverence for its rites, or arm him with that safeguard of safeguards, the habit of frequenting the confessional. A Catholic would rather see his only son die in the flower of youth than know certainly that that son would never use the means provided by the church for the cleansing of his soul from the sins which kill its life.

This has been said to show that Catholic laymen have the most profound interest in the question of education. They do not submit to a double tax for

school purposes merely out of "pure cussedness," nor out of "blind obedience" to the voice of Rome. The voice of Rome is the voice of God and their own consciences; but, if Rome had not spoken, no thoughtful Catholic could conscientiously accept entirely secular education for his children: therefore the present public-school system does not satisfy him. He strains every nerve to send his children to Catholic schools. When this is impossible, he does the best he can.

Primarily, he cares nothing for the aggrandizement of what is called the political power of the church. He knows there are men—professional politicians—only too willing to avail themselves of the prestige that may be acquired by seeming to be the familiars of prelates of the church,—men who use this association, as women anxious to get into "society" use their "church connections" and charitable plans, for purposes of their own. And he knows, too, that, while a prelate or a priest may accept in his charitable efforts the help of such men, the priest or prelate is obliged to take the risk of seeming to have political affiliations, because it is impossible to snub a politician who is *so* kind to the orphans and *so* anxious for the glory of God's house. One may distrust the Greeks when they bear gifts, but it is sometimes impossible to kick them out, for the gifts might go with them. And gifts when there are churches to be supported, and hospitals to be founded, and schools to be built, and asylums to be freed from debt, and orphans to be brought up in the belief and practice of Christianity, are not to be neglected, unless they are plainly the wages of sin.

Nevertheless, none of us desires great material possessions for the church or the religious orders of the church; nor that the church and state in this country shall be united; neither do we want a prelate of the church whose kingdom is not of this earth to be a political ruler in the land. In fact, we do not think of these things at all. We are prouder of Newman and Manning and Gibbons and Lavigerie than of Richelieu or Wolsey. We have read history with some advantage, and we know that the old world has less to teach than our new world has to learn, but that here, of all countries, the Christian Church is most untrammelled, most free, most respected, because she is least involved in the changing and treacherous sands of politics. We do desire religious and practical education for our children; and it is impossible to get either in the public schools which are the creation of mediocrity for the perpetuation of mediocrities. We must have religious schools, for our children *must* be Catholics in order to be Christians; and therefore, with limited means and at the cost of sacrifices, we are assisting our bishops and priests to form Catholic schools, which, in time, may lose their worst fault—their similarity to the public schools so far as the practical part of education is concerned.

MAURICE FRANCIS EGAN.